

## Grammatical Notes

1. A Clause is a simple, complete utterance, such as Uu kɔ nɛ - 'He is coming', or U ɲaa wiaa kala woso-woso nɛ - 'He does everything superficially'.

A Sentence may be a single clause or it may be two or more clauses joined together. The little words that join clauses into sentences are conjunctions: a 'and', an ka 'but', etc.

U mu бага an bi pere.

He went to the farm but did not work.

A clause may be a question if the last vowel is lengthened and (in writing) a question-mark added: this is the sort of question where you must answer "yes" or "no":

D nyimma doliee?            'Is your father well?'

Another sort of question has a question-word or interrogative like bes - 'what?' or nii - 'where?'

Nii nɛ u hɛ?                'Where is he?'

A clause may also be a command or imperative, telling somebody to do something:

Kɛɲ piaa kaa kɔ.            'Bring the yams.'

A clause may also be negative, stating what is not the case:

Mi bi piaa yɔbɔ.            'I did not buy any yams.'

"Clause-finally" means "at the end of a clause".

2. A Phrase is several short words filling the place of a single word. For instance, "where?" is a single word, nii, but "when?" is a phrase, chɛ bes? The Subject of a clause is the person or thing who is doing or experiencing the action of the whole clause. It can be a word or phrase. In Sisaala, as in English, the subject usually comes first:

Mi bi u yirin jin.        'I do not know his name.'

U hɛ dime.                'He is there.'

La di mi nandɔɔ yie      'My friend and I go everywhere  
to ɔɔɔ.                      together.'

The Object of a clause is the person or thing who is affected by the action, and normally follows the verb (see below) in Sisaala as in English, except in negative clauses in the past tense, when it comes before:

U fɔ bɔsɔ.                'He made a mat.'

U bi bɔsɔ fɔɔ.            'He did not make a mat.'

The object may also be put at the very beginning of the clause for emphasis, in which case it is followed by ne:

Kuoro ne baa danna. 'It is the chief they are praising.'

When the object is a pronoun (see below) it is written on the end of the verb word:

Mi nau. 'I saw him.'

3. Nouns are words referring to people, places or things (including abstract things like truth, heat, etc.). They can be the subject or the object of a clause:

Batun doho naa fiuu ne. 'An elephant's tail is short.'

Bile dii kulun. 'The child eats T.Z.'

Pronouns are used like nouns, but just refer to the speaker, the hearer, or some third person:

mi, ŋ, u, la, ma, ba 'I, you (sing.), he/she/it, we, you (pl.), they'

A noun may be singular, referring to one object or a mass of something, or plural, referring to a number of objects:

vaha, vahij 'dog, dogs'

4. Sisaala has words, which we called Roots in this dictionary, which are attached to nouns to make compound words. The end of the word which comes first is usually dropped to make the compound. The meaning of the roots is usually either the same as a noun, or else a descriptive meaning like an English adjective:

<u>noun</u>	<u>root</u>	<u>compound</u>
nyanyalin 'sickness'	-tiina 'owner'	nyanyal-tiina 'invalid'
liin 'water'	-fiela 'cold'	lii-fiela 'cold water'

The roots are entered in the dictionary with a hyphen to show where the other word is to be joined on. Two examples of compound words made by using the root are:

-choolun ... rt. beloved, favourite  
bii-choolun 'favourite child'  
ku-choolun 'favourite thing'

5. The other main part of the clause is the Verb. This expresses the action or state involved. Two forms of Sisaala verbs are given in the dictionary, called Basic and Augmented.

yoo, yobo	v. ... to buy
vogs, vogo	v. ... to be satisfied

The main uses of these forms are as follows:

<u>Basic</u>	<u>Augmented</u>
When followed by an object:	With no object <u>immediately following</u> :
<u>Jon</u> lii-la <u>waale gaari-la</u> . 'Go and water the garden.'	U <u>hono gbare</u> nialin. 'He sat and waited for the people.'
In imperative clauses:	
<u>Fa mu!</u> 'Go quickly!'	Mi bi <u>mua</u> . 'I did not go.'
In the future tense:	
Mi <u>jan mu</u> . 'I will go.'	

A few verbs are irregular in that they use the basic form in the negative clause. This is shown in the dictionary by giving a negative form:

hei, hey	v. (neg., bi hei) ...
----------	-----------------------

Besides the two forms mentioned in the dictionary, there are two other forms. One is a reduplicated form, in which the basic form of the verb is preceded by repetition of its first consonant and either the vowel 'i' or 'u', thus:

beg	becomes	bibeg
chuuri	becomes	chichuuri
mu	becomes	mumu
kpaars	becomes	kpukpaars

This form usually describes an action which is repeated many times or is going on all the time:

Wairin ns kenu, u chichel. 'He is cold and keeps shivering.'

The second of these forms end with 'in' or 'un' according to the first vowel of the verb; this ending is added to the consonant of the verb, replacing any final vowel, thus:

duori	becomes	duorun
lin	becomes	limin and so on.

This form is used when reference to the action of the verb needs to be fitted into a noun's place in a clause:

duori - 'to swim'

U jin liin duorun. 'He knows how to swim.'

6. An Adjective is a word that gives further information about a noun, while an Adverb gives further information about the verb mentioned in a clause:

U niin naa logogo ne. 'His mouth is wide open.'

Chuomoo yie fa kpuru-  
kpuru ne. 'Rabbits run very fast.'

In some cases Sisaala words may sometimes be adjectives and other times adverbs:

Lii-la naa len-len ne. 'The water has a bad taste.'

In this case len-len functions as an adjective, while in the following case len-len is an adverb:

Sikiri sima len-len. 'Sugar is very sweet.'

Adjectives and adverbs are very often reduplicated roots, which are connected with a hyphen (e.g., mulo-mulo). Some of these roots may recur many times or may be mentioned only once or twice:

U hon dims deen-deen-deen-deen-deen.

'He was there for a long time.'

**SISAALA - ENGLISH**  
**English-Sisaala**  
**D I C T I O N A R Y**

**Ed: Regina Blass**

**Institute of Linguistics**  
**Ghana**